(b) if not, the time by which the above conversion work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No target date for completion of the project has yet been fixed. The completion would depend upon availability of resources.

Improvement in working condition of Railway Staff

687. SHRI SHAHID SIDDQUI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have implemented the Khanna Committee Report to improve the working conditions of the Railway Staff, particularly the Drivers;

(b) what action is being taken to improve the visibility of signals of Rail Tracks especially at accident points; and

(c) action taken to improve the living conditions, of Rail Drivers at various Railway stations where they have to stay temporarily while discharging their duty?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) Improvement in the working condition of drivers is an ongoing process. Action has been initiated on the recommendations of Khanna Committee. Some recent steps taken are as under:

* Competition of most crew friendly cab was held.
* Good features to be incorporated in the drivers cabs have been standardized and Railways asked to implement them. Full implementation of these instructions will lead to safe and fatigue free driving.

(b) Following action is being taken to improve the visibility of signals:

* In Semaphore signaling territory, locations, where the visibility is to be improved, are identified jointly by field supervisors during regular foot plate inspection. Action is thereafter taken by way of

chopping of tree branches obstructing the clear visibility of signals, provision of back screen at vulnerable locations; and cleaning etc. of lenses and font & burners.

* In colour light signaling territories, regular joint inspections are carried out and measures are taken to improve the visibility by re-focusing of signal lamps, improving voltage level at signal lamps, cleaning of lenses etc. High reliability triple pole lamps and LED based Signal lamps are also being adopted on a large scale to improve reliability and visibility of signals.

(c) Recommendations of Khanna commiittee, in respect of running rooms where drivers take rest, have been accepted and Zonal Railways advised to implement them. The Railway Ministry has also set up a committee to recommend improvements in the running rooms.

Pending projects of gauge conversion in Tamil Nadu

688. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the status of gauge conversion in Tamil Nadu sector of the Southern Railways;

(b) what is the total length covered so far and the length pending for conversion into BG;

(c) total allocation for these projects; and

(d) by when, they are likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) to (c) As on 01.04. 1992, a total of 2907 km. of Meter Gauge track was existing in the State of Tamil Nadu, out of which gauge conversion of 995 km. has been completed till 31.3.2003. Work is in various stages of progress on 1280 km. length. The total budget outlay during 2003-04 for all the gauge conversion projects in the State of Tamil Nadu is Rs. 92.89 crore.

(d) No time frame has been fixed. The ongoing projects would get completed in the coming years as per the availability of resources.